



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: January 1, 2004 – March 31, 2005

**SUDAN: CITIZEN'S VIEWS AND POLITICAL DIALOGUE (04857)
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00**

**Project dates: July 2004 – March 2005
Total budget: \$100,000.00 Expenses to date: \$100,000.00**

I. SUMMARY

On January 9, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Government of Sudan (GoS) signed two peace protocols that put the finishing touches on a comprehensive peace agreement between the two parties after nearly 22 years of civil war. While the implementation of that agreement has been slow, both sides have made progress on several important fronts, including in the drafting of an Interim National Constitution. In the meantime, the crisis in Darfur has continued to preoccupy the international community, as the United Nations (UN) also prepares to deploy some 10,000 peacekeepers to monitor the implementation of the North-South agreement during the Interim Period.

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has undertaken qualitative research with the aim of ensuring that ordinary citizens have a voice in the peace process. Specifically, this research was conducted to facilitate the participation of southern Sudanese in the political development of their country, and to gather basic information on their views and opinions to assist Government of South Sudan (GoSS) leaders in addressing their concerns.

During this quarter, NDI continued to disseminate copies of the focus group final report to civil society, international stakeholders and southern Sudanese citizens. In addition, the research findings were presented to high-level officials of USAID, the State Department, and on Capitol Hill. As of March 31, NDI has concluded its work under this award, but will continue its program under a follow-on associate cooperative agreement. In the coming quarter, NDI will prepare and submit to USADI a final report.

II. BACKGROUND

The last round of peace talks between the Khartoum government and the SPLM/A was adjourned in December 2004, and a final agreement was signed in a formal ceremony on January 9. Specifically, the two parties signed protocols on a permanent ceasefire and implementation modalities for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, marking the end of the negotiations that

concluded more than two decades of civil war. In the meantime, the ongoing conflict in Darfur drags on, and continues to threaten the fragile North-South peace process. Although the UN Security Council has repeatedly weighed in to pressure the GoS to clamp down on the militias perpetrating the atrocities in Darfur, progress has been slow. The African Union has deployed fewer than 2,000 troops to the area to monitor the situation; however, their mandate to observe in the absence of any real capacity to enforce the peace, has not succeeded in halting the ongoing violence. As recently as March 23, a member of USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team was shot and injured, when an unidentified armed gunman ambushed her convoy.

As the UN also prepares to deploy a further 10,000 peacekeepers to Sudan, the implementation of the CPA has moved forward less robustly than was hoped. At the same time, both sides have made significant progress on several important fronts, including the drafting of an Interim National Constitution. The SPLM has opened up a liaison office in Khartoum, in addition to several sub-offices in other regions throughout the North. The World Bank-led Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) recently released its final report in March, outlining a sector-by-sector strategy aimed to address the enormous array of needs in the development of Sudan as a whole.

Between August and October 2004, NDI carried out a series of targeted focus groups in southern Sudan with the aim of facilitating the participation of southern Sudanese in the political development of the country and gathering information on their views and opinions to assist GoSS leaders in addressing their concerns. By mid-October, the Institute's research team completed the remaining focus groups, conducted a thorough analysis of the transcripts from the proceedings, and produced a final report detailing its findings. These findings were presented in a private briefing to the SPLM leadership on December 12 in Naivasha, and released to the international community through a public briefing in Washington the following week. The research was conducted in partnership with the New Sudan Center for Statistics and Evaluation (NSCSE), and in conjunction with other NDI programs in Sudan, including support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

NDI's objectives for this program are two-fold:

- To assist key actors in the GoSS to better understand and address the viewpoints of citizens on a variety of issues such as expectations of the new government, public confidence in maintaining the peace, and opinions of the peace process and framework agreement to date; and
- To establish a baseline of citizen's views at this historic time in Sudan's history and use it as a basis for gauging change over the interim period.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

During this period, NDI continued to disseminate copies of the focus group final report to key members of civil society, international stakeholders and southern Sudanese citizens, both in the Diaspora and within southern Sudan. With respect to the latter, NDI staff distributed copies of the executive summaries of the final report in both English and Arabic to local leaders in the Bahr al Ghazal and Southern Kordofan (Nuba Mountains) regions of the South. This

distribution was done in the context of an interim round of focus groups conducted around issues associated with the future constitution of southern Sudan, an effort also supported by USAID under a follow-on associate cooperative agreement.

In addition, NDI presented the research findings to the USAID Administrator and senior USAID staff in Washington, U.S. State Department officials, U.S. Congressman Tancredo, and key House and Senate staff members in a public briefing hosted by the House Africa Subcommittee. In each of these briefings, the report was received with great enthusiasm and appreciation, and many expressed an interest in arranging for future such briefings every six months.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective 1: To assist key actors in the GoSS to better understand and address the viewpoints of citizens on a variety of issues such as expectations of the new government, public confidence in maintaining the peace, and opinions of the peace process and framework agreement to date.

- NDI and the NSCSE continued to share and discuss the research findings with SPLM leaders, increasing awareness of the views and opinions of the southern Sudanese people. As revealed through numerous discussions with senior SPLM officials, for example, the information has been used as a reference point in the ongoing development of new GoSS institutions.
- The focus group research has also been highlighted on several occasions by representatives of UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and key donors, as a tool to better understand the views and opinions of citizens as a critical moment in the country's history.

Objective 2: To establish a baseline of citizen's views at this historic time in Sudan's history and use it as a basis for gauging change over the interim period.

- NDI's report has been taken up by Sudanese civil society and Diaspora groups as a credible source of information and accurate reflection of southern Sudanese views. The focus group final report was also used as a reference document in the development of the draft constitution for South Sudan offered by civil society.
- Completed in the months leading up to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, NDI's December 2004 focus group report established a baseline from which to measure changes in public perceptions of the peace process. NDI anticipates that the findings will be continually referred to throughout the pre-interim and interim periods, as the only information of its kind that presents a snapshot of citizen views *before* the agreement was signed.

V. EVALUATION

Since the release of the focus group findings in December 2004, the Institute has continued to develop relationships with key members of the SPLM leadership, civil society, relevant stakeholders in the international community engaged in Sudan with follow-on support, and other leaders at a local level inside southern Sudan. Inspiring a sense of confidence among each of these constituencies is critical to establishing NDI's credibility as a reliable and trustworthy partner in this effort. While it is not possible to ascertain with any degree of precision how the research findings were used by the SPLM in its internal deliberations and decision making, the Institute has repeatedly received extensive praise for its work from high-ranking officials of the movement. Such feedback has not only reaffirmed the value of the focus group research, but has helped to give voice to the needs and concerns of the southern Sudanese citizens in the political process.

By publishing the focus group findings and making them widely available for public consumption in English and Arabic, NDI's credibility and legitimacy as a welcome contributor to the ongoing peace process has effectively been enhanced. Consequently, the SPLM has increasingly turned to NDI for advice and support in related endeavors, including a request for an additional series of focus groups commencing in March gathering citizen input in the development of a constitution for southern Sudan. The Institute anticipates the completion of this research in April 2005, and a final report to be released in May. Further, the success of NDI's first focus group research in southern Sudan has also led to a growing interest in similar research in the North. NDI has received support from the NED to conduct this project, which is expected to be completed in July of this year.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

There will be no future activities under this grant, as the project has now officially concluded. A final report will be forthcoming. NDI will continue its work in Sudan under a follow-on associate cooperative agreement.